

Roe Advocates for Farmers in House Ag Committee Hearing on Cap-and-Trade Legislation

Climate legislation
could have serious implications on rural communities

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman Phil Roe (TN-1) gave the following opening statement at the House Agriculture hearing on cap-and-trade legislation:

Mr. Chairman, I thank you and the Ranking Member for holding this hearing and appreciate the opportunity to make an opening statement. I realize I am only a freshman in this body and there may be much more to come, but this is the worst piece of legislation I have seen and we need make the American farmer aware of just what is about to happen.

Speaker Pelosi has demanded this bill be out of all committees by June 19 and will probably have this on the House floor the following week. This is the only chance most of us on this Committee will have to go on record until the vote on final passage. None of us will have the opportunity in this Committee to offer amendments as there is no mark-up scheduled. I want the farmers in Tennessee to know I am strongly opposed to Mr. Waxman's "cap and tax" scheme.

One thousand pages of legislation taxing the farmer at every turn, taking away the farmer's ability to compete, to survive. One thousand pages and "Agriculture" is only mentioned six times. I assume the Secretary is coming here today to advocate in favor of these taxes and regulations. Here supporting Mr. Waxman's policies that take dead aim at the American farmer.

Let there be no confusion, we are discussing a national energy tax; a national tax that will be borne by those farmers who can afford it least. These farmers are the ones who rely one way or another on the products and services this national tax hits hardest: fuel, fertilizer, and other chemicals necessary to operate the farm, and the electricity needed to run everything else.

In East Tennessee we get our affordable electricity from the Tennessee Valley Authority. TVA produces over 150 million Kilo-Watt Hours a year about 60% of that from fossil fuels, the remainder from nuclear and hydroelectric plants. Right now a farmer can get that power at about 9 cents per kWh and is glad to get it. What will be the price under Mr. Waxman's plan? The farmers in East Tennessee operate on a narrow margin as it is. Why now in this current economic climate would we want to target the agriculture community?

In the past month I have held town hall meetings in East Tennessee with both the cattlemen and dairy farmers. They aren't making it as it is now. The additional burden of a national energy tax will eliminate the dairy farm and cattle farm from the region. In April the EPA declared methane a "green house gas" and a threat to public health. What does that mean for the future of the cattle farmer?

One certain way to reduce carbon emissions in this country is to simply reduce our standard of living. If that is Mr. Waxman's intention with this legislation, he will certainly be successful. I hope the Secretary of Agriculture does not support abdicating his responsibility to meet the needs of our farmers and ranchers to Mr. Waxman and the EPA.

House Agriculture Committee Holds a Public Hearing: To review pending climate legislation

Panel I

The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

Panel II

Mr. Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Steve Ruddell, Senior Associate, First Environment, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Earl Garber, Second Vice President, National Association of Conservation Districts, Basile, Louisiana

Mr. Fred Yoder, Past President and Climate Change Task Force Member, National Association of Corn Growers, Plain City, Ohio

Mr. Roger Johnson, President, National Farmers Union, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Ken Nobis, Treasurer, National Milk Producers Federation, St. Johns, Michigan

Panel III

Mr. Ford West, President, The Fertilizer Institute, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Glenn English, Chief Executive Officer, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Arlington, Virginia

According to The Hill, a Washington based publication, The House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) said Wednesday that he's at an impasse with the lead sponsor of a climate change bill strongly backed by Pelosi (D-Calif.), and that his list of Democratic members who would join him in voting against the measure is growing rather than shrinking. Peterson has warned that the bill put together by Waxman and Energy and Environment subcommittee Chairman Edward Markey (D-Mass.) will fail if agriculture-related provisions aren't altered, and he's said he has as many as 45 votes on his side. That number of Democratic defections would certainly doom the prospects of passing the bill in the House. Peterson has issues with provisions in and related to the bill, including how the movement toward renewable energy sources will affect rural areas and the biofuel industry.